

# *Kalamazoo Gazette*

## **Alamo Fire Victims Sue Landlord**

By Craig McCool

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Nine families displaced by a fire at Alamo Hills Apartments in March filed lawsuits Wednesday against the apartment complex.

They allege that the complex could have done more to protect belongings they were forced to abandon in the aftermath of the blaze.

Bernard Dempsey Jr., an attorney with Western Michigan Legal Services, the group that represents the tenants, said Alamo Hills gave the displaced families very limited opportunity to remove belongings.

"They were given three days to get their stuff out, and if they couldn't get moved out in three days, their stuff was discarded," Dempsey said. "Alamo Hills just threw it out."

Others, he said, lost possessions to looters after the March 23 blaze, which left 78 people temporarily homeless.

According to the lawsuit, the tenants were prohibited from entering their apartments to retrieve possessions and were promised that the complex would provide security.

A spokesperson for PM One, the company that manages Alamo Hills, could not be reached for comment.

Nine separate suits were filed in 8th District Court, which handles civil claims of less than \$25,000.

"We're asking for the reimbursement of the value of their property and a small amount for stress -- \$3,000 on top of their out-of-pocket expenses for their lost stuff," Dempsey said.

"They're not looking to get rich off this. A lot of this is simply because they were treated so badly."

Dempsey said most of the tenants who filed suits still live at the apartment complex, although many are trying to find homes elsewhere.

"The new apartments (they were provided) were not in very good shape. That's actually one of the claims," he said.